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From: Michael Wiedmer

Sent: Thur 9/22/2011 5:33:21 PM

Subject: Iliamna Lake seals

Iliamna Lake seal talk at NMML (Seattle) next week.

The next National Marine Mammal Laboratory (NMML) Seminar will be September 28, noon-1:00pm, in the NMML conference room, 2039 in building 4 on the NOAA campus at Sand Point. This seminar will be presented by Dave Withrow, of the Polar Ecosystems Program here at the NMML. If there is interest in having this seminar available via WebEx/Teleconference, please let Chuck Fowler know (charles.fowler@noaa.gov) by noon Monday, Sept. 26. If you are attending from off campus, please give yourself a few extra minutes to pass through the security process.

Title: Freshwater Harbor Seals of Lake Iliamna, Alaska: Do they pup and over-winter in the lake?

Abstract: Lake Iliamna is home to a small colony of harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*) that are thought to live there year-round. There are no known accounts of immigration or emigration despite access to Bristol Bay via the Kvichak River (120 km in length). Local subsistence hunters harvest small numbers of seals in the early spring when seals haul out along cracks and

leads of the frozen lake. There is conflicting information however, regarding when, where, or whether seals pup in the lake. We flew six aerial surveys in 2010 to support our ongoing efforts to determine seal abundance, distribution, and seasonal timing. In April, 11 seals were observed in small shallow-water pools while the rest of the lake was completely frozen-over with no visible cracks or leads, and we did not see any areas that could support the several hundred seals that have been documented in the summer. In late May, only 30 seals (no pups) were observed. In July, 205 seals (including 63 newborn pups) were spotted. Elsewhere in Alaska we observe harbor seals pupping much earlier, in May and June. In early August, 243 seals (including 55 pups) were seen. By the end of August, the pups had grown to the point where they could no longer be reliably distinguished from older juveniles. The total seal count was 179. Our final survey was in early November. The lake was not frozen and we were able to locate only eight seals. In conclusion, seals do pup in the lake and some seals obviously over-winter, but it seems unlikely that most seals do.